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## ORAIBI MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

By H. R. VOTH

The marriage ceremony of the Hopi Indians of Arizona is a complicated and protracted performance, and while the customs and ceremonies in the different Hopi pueblos are essentially the same, I will confine myself to those observed at Oraibi, the largest and most primitive of the villages of Tusayan.

It is well known that among some civilized as well as among some half-civilized peoples, a consideration is given for the woman or girl to be wedded; and while in some cases this is done in such manner that it can hardly be said the woman is bought, in others it is equivalent to direct purchase. Among the Hopi Indians marriage by purchase does not exist. To be sure gifts are made to the bride and by the bride; but the former can in no wise be regarded as an exchange for the woman, hence in this respect the marriage customs of Oraibi differ materially from those of many other primitive peoples, including many of the American tribes. Furthermore, among the Hopi the choice of a life companion is left almost entirely to the couple contemplating marriage, coercion on the part of the parents or guardians being exercised only in rare instances.

The condition of affairs in a Hopi village is such that young people have ample opportunity of becoming thoroughly acquainted. Nearly all the houses adjoin, and most of the streets are narrow. Families do not come and go as in a settlement of white people, and, above all, social intercourse is not influenced by language, occupation, social standing, or religious differences, as in most Caucasian communities. So the Hopi mingle with one another from early childhood; they grow together into manhood

or womanhood ; on the common playground, in their daily occupations, in the many social and religious gatherings, they meet and learn to know and to love or to hate one another. When one has made his choice it is not a difficult matter to make the fact known to the other. To be sure this cannot be done through missives of love, because the young Hopi, with the exception of the few who in recent years have attended schools, are not versed in the art of writing. Although rare, opportunities are not lacking for a young man to meet the girl of his choice, either in the village or perhaps in company with an intimate friend outside the pueblo, and make known to her his feelings ; but after this announcement it becomes more usual for lovers to meet alone either in the settlement or beyond its limits.

The love affair of a young couple often remains a matter between themselves so far as any public declaration of their relations is concerned ; but under the circumstances of close communication in the village, above mentioned, the prospective relationship becomes an open secret at once. In many cases the young people soon inform their parents or guardians of their betrothal. A request for permission or sanction is rarely asked or indeed expected, acquiescence on the part of the parents being regarded as a matter of course. Viewed from our standpoint the young people may now be regarded as engaged or betrothed. The young man visits his affianced occasionally at her home. When it is decided by the young people that they are ready to be married, the parents, or their representatives, are notified. This "being ready" is determined to some extent by the pecuniary affairs of the husband-to-be. Young men have complained to me that they would like to get married, but "*Nu ookiwa, nashta cavayo, nashta moro, nashta shiwa, nashta pisala*" (I am poor ; have no horse, no burro, no metal (money), no blankets). A young man is expected to have at least these most necessary belongings, perhaps also some beads, and, if possible, a little money before he marries, but as his requirements in this

respect are meager, the conditions are by no means strict. To some extent the time for the wedding is determined by the custom that marriages rarely, if ever, take place during summer, and seldom in late spring, when the Hopi are busy in their fields, but in autumn or winter, the time of leisure, of gaming and frolic, of ceremonies and *katsina* dances.

As soon as the bride-elect has notified her mother, or, in event of the death of the mother, an aunt, that she is ready to be married, the mother takes down the girl's hair, which has hitherto been worn in two coils or whorls, and ties a knot in the loosened hair on each side of the head.<sup>1</sup> Taking a tray of meal made from white corn, the mother accompanies her daughter to the house of the latter's future husband. So far as present information goes, this is always done either late in the evening or very early in the morning. Arriving at the door, the mother calls, saying, "*It kwushuu*" (Take this). The door is at once opened by the future mother-in-law or her substitute, who, of course, is acquainted with the situation. The latter takes the tray of meal, saying, "*Ask-wali*" (Thank you), "*Pakii*" (Come in), or "*Katuu*" (Sit down). The girl enters, but the mother usually returns to her home.

The girl is now called *mövi* (bride).<sup>2</sup> If she has come in the morning she is at once assigned a place at the meal-grinding trough, where she grinds white corn all day; if late in the evening, she remains over night, sleeping with the female members of the family, and begins to grind corn the next morning. The young man goes about his business as usual—gathering wood in the hills, performing other tasks, or loitering in the kiva to which he belongs. Late in the afternoon the *mövi* stops grinding corn and sits during the entire evening on folded skins or blankets, generally near the meal-troughs. She wears her usual clothing, but sometimes, I

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<sup>1</sup> I am told that in other villages the hair is not taken down until the girl arrives at the home of her betrothed.

<sup>2</sup> The term *mövi* is applied indiscriminately both before and after the actual marriage ceremony or wedding-day.

believe, she places over it the *atöe* or white ceremonial blanket with a blue and red border. Little conversation is held with a *mövi* during this and the following days of the betrothal. Whenever I spoke to a young woman about to be married, she usually responded pleasantly to my inquiries, but informed me that she was expected not to talk much, and on one occasion the mother-in-law, who was an old friend, sat near by when I began to speak to the *mövi* and told me it was customary with the Hopi to speak very little to a bride.

The next morning the corn-grinding is resumed and continued all day, white corn being selected as on the previous day. On the third day the grinding is again undertaken, but this time a bluish-black corn is used. In the evening of this day the various girl friends of the *mövi* bring trays of cornmeal to the house where the latter stays. On the next (fourth) morning these trays are filled with ears of corn and returned to their owners by the mother-in-law of the bride. This day may be called the wedding-day proper.

Long before dawn the bride and her mother-in-law arise, and the mother of the bride arrives about the same time. The bridegroom and the remainder of his family then get up, and soon a number of female relations of both families, especially the aunts, begin to appear, each one bringing a small quantity of water in a vessel. At the fireplace in the corner water is being boiled in a large pot. The two mothers prepare, in two large bowls, foaming suds of the pounded roots of yucca (*Yucca angustifolia*), called by the Hopi *mohu*, to which some warm water is added. When this is ready the mothers kneel on the floor, placing the bowls of suds before them. The young man then kneels before the bowl prepared by his future mother-in-law, and the *mövi* before the bowl of the young man's mother; their heads are then thoroughly washed with the suds. Although the two mothers do the principal work, they are now and then assisted by the gathered relations, who pour a handful of suds over the head of each and aid in the

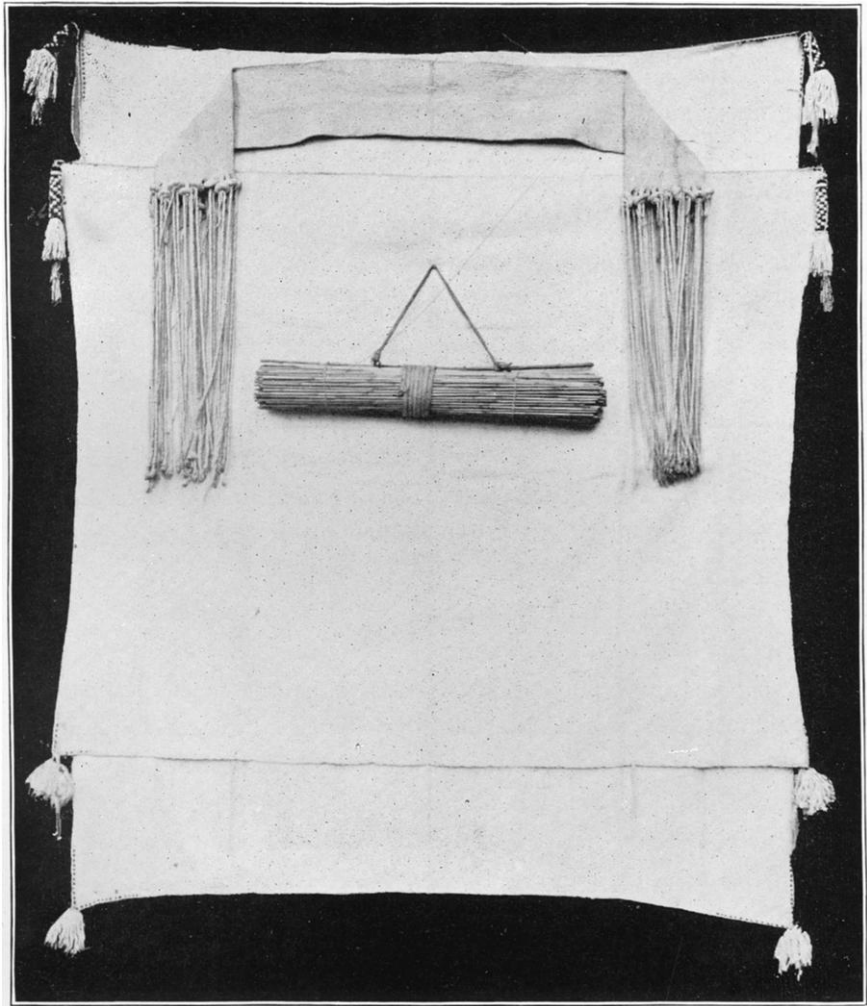
washing. Presently one after the other of the women and girls, and sometimes more than one at a time, creep in between the young couple, trying to hold their own heads over the bowls and feigning to displace the bride. Others try to tear away the intruders and to take their places, the wrangling being accompanied with much hilarity. When the head-washing is about concluded, all who have brought water with them pour it on the heads of the couple, thus assisting in rinsing the hair. After thoroughly pressing the water from the hair, the young man and the maid sit near the fireplace to warm and dry themselves. Most of the visitors then return to their homes.

When the bridal couple have dried their hair, each takes a pinch of cornmeal and both leave the house and go silently to the eastern side of the mesa on which the pueblo of Oraibi is situated. Standing close to the edge they hold the meal to their lips, breathe a silent prayer, and then sprinkle the meal toward the dawn. They then return to the house as silently as they departed, and henceforth are regarded as husband and wife. "What did you pray when you sprinkled the meal?" I asked a friend who had recently been married. "I asked God to make me happy," she answered; but she had been attending the government school for a number of years. The usual prayer, I believe, is for a long and prosperous life, but the wording varies with the occasion.

After the ceremony is over, the mother of the bride builds a fire under the *piki* stone, while the daughter prepares the batter and at once begins to bake a large quantity of *piki* or paper-bread. After having built the fire the mother returns to her home.

A number of the members of both families assemble and partake of breakfast. Whether particular relations only are present at this meal, or whether a ceremony of any kind occurs in connection with it, has not been ascertained, although it is believed that such is not the case.

After breakfast the father of the young man takes some native



HOPI BRIDAL COSTUME

cotton and, running through the village, distributes it among the relations and friends of the family, who pick the seeds from the cotton and then return it. Before the man leaves the house some wrangling takes place in which he and the bride take conspicuous part and which is attended with much joking and hilarity. Whether this episode is the rule or an exception, and just what it consists of, are not fully known. On one occasion the father's hair, face, and clothing were daubed with clay when he emerged from the house with a ragged bag containing the cotton. Nothing of special significance occurs in the house during this day. Friends come and go, each one partaking of the food kept in readiness, the floor of the house, as usual, serving as a table.

A few days later a cryer announces from the roof of a house that on a certain day the cotton for the *mövi's* bridal costume will be spun in the kivas. This announcement serves as an invitation to the friends of the young couple to participate in the spinning. Whether this invitation includes everyone in the village, or whether it is limited to the relations and friends of the two families, has not been fully ascertained, but there are reasons for believing that the invitation is a general one. Just after breakfast on the appointed day the men assemble in their respective kivas and are soon at work, some in carding, others in spinning the cotton furnished by the parents of the bridegroom. The rasping of the carding combs and the buzzing of the primitive spindles are accompanied by the singing, joking, and laughter of those assembled. The affairs of the village are discussed, its gossip rehearsed, and occasionally some good story-teller relates interesting adventures of war and the chase during the busy hours occupied in the work. On one occasion the principal entertainer was an old man from a neighboring village. He related certain personal experiences of his younger days, when he had been on the warpath with other Hopi against another tribe, and the rapt attention with which the spinners listened to him, and the uproarious laughter that punctuated certain well-told incidents



of his exploits, bore testimony to the old man's ability as an entertainer.

In the house where the marriage has taken place many busy hands, mostly those of women, have prepared dinner for the cotton spinners. On the previous evening sheep and goats, generally ten in number, were killed, and these are now being cooked in a stew consisting mainly of corn. Large quantities of *piki* are being baked and other dishes are in preparation in various houses. Late in the afternoon a herald announces that the feast is ready and invites the spinners, some of whom are already waiting on the neighboring house-tops. They respond to the invitation in scores, and arrange themselves in rows on each side of the food-bowls and baskets that are spread on the floors of the different rooms of the house and even of adjoining houses. The fingers serve as forks, knives, and spoons, and the stainless members contrast strongly with the grimy hand after the meal is finished, bearing witness to the fact that the stew in the bowls has served a double purpose. After the visitors have finished the meal the relations and intimate friends of the family partake of the food, and generally little is left when all have been satisfied.

The cotton that has been spun is taken by the spinners to the house of the young man, and the manufacture of the bridal costume is soon commenced in one of the kivas. This costume consists of two square white blankets (one measuring about 60 by 72 inches, the other about 50 by 60 inches), a white sash with long knotted fringes at each end, a reed mat in which the costume is afterward kept (plate VIII), and a pair of buckskin moccasins to each of which is attached half a buckskin which serves as leggings. This costume is usually made by the bridegroom and his male relations, especially his father. One works on the robes, another on the moccasins, a third one on the belt, etc.; each labors a few hours and then is relieved by another. It sometimes requires several weeks to complete the costume. The finishing of the robes consists of giving them a coating of wet



HOPI BRIDE GOING HOME

This plate illustrates one of a series of Hopi figures now on exhibition in the Field Columbian Museum. The casts for these figures were made at Oraibi under the direction of Dr G. A. Dorsey, Curator of the Department of Anthropology, to whom the author is indebted for the photographs from which this and plate VIII were prepared.

kaolin. They remain in the loom until dry, when they are taken out, folded, and carried to the house of the bride, where the tassels are made and appended.

The entire costume is now given to the bride, who is regarded as having been married several weeks, and on the following morning the final act in the marriage drama, the so-called "going home," takes place. The bride is arrayed in one of the white robes and puts on her moccasins. The other robe and the white belt are wrapped up in the reed mat, and shortly before sunrise the bride leaves the home of her husband's parents, where she has been staying since the marriage, and, holding the bundle with the robe and belt on her extended hands, walks slowly and alone through the streets to the home of her mother (plate IX). Here she is met by the latter at the door with the greeting "*Askwali um pito*" (Thanks that you have come). The mother takes the bundle from her daughter, the latter doffs the robe and moccasins, and the protracted marriage ceremony is over. During the day the young husband appears at the house of his mother-in-law, where the couple live until a house of their own is provided. If the house thus temporarily occupied chances to be crowded, another is sometimes soon prepared; if not, the couple may live with the wife's father and mother for several years.

The marriage costume is rolled in the mat receptacle, which is usually suspended from a roof-beam in a back room. The moccasins are soon put to ordinary use, but the robes and belt are worn only on ceremonial occasions. One of the white robes is sometimes embroidered, when it becomes a ceremonial garment and is called *toihi*. Often, however, on account of its strength and large size, it is sooner or later converted into a bag for use in transporting corn and watermelons on burros from the fields to the village. The other robe is generally preserved for a longer period, and is employed in various future ceremonies. The young mother puts it on at the name-giving ceremony of her

first-born, and it often serves as a shroud when its owner is given her last resting-place.

In conclusion, mention should be made of the fact that at the *Niman-katcina*, the "farewell" ceremony of the *katcinas*, when toward evening the latter are ready to depart, all the young women who have been married during the year appear in the crowd of spectators dressed in their white robes, look on for a time, and then go to their respective homes. Whether this is an essential part of the marriage ceremony, and what its significance is, have not yet been ascertained.